

agreement with that subcommittee to settle a complaint on which the Statement is based, that agreement, unless the respondent requests otherwise, shall be in writing and signed by the respondent and the respondent's counsel, the Chairman and Ranking Minority Member of the subcommittee, and the outside counsel, if any.

(i) Statements or information derived solely from a respondent or his counsel during any settlement discussions between the Committee or a subcommittee thereof and the respondent shall not be included in any report of the subcommittee or the Committee or otherwise publicly disclosed without the consent of the respondent;

(j) Whenever a motion to establish an investigative subcommittee does not prevail, the Committee shall promptly send a letter to the respondent informing him of such vote.

(k) Witnesses shall be afforded a reasonable period of time, as determined by the Committee or subcommittee, to prepare for an appearance before an investigative subcommittee or for an adjudicatory hearing and to obtain counsel.

(l) Prior to their testimony, witnesses shall be furnished a printed copy of the Committee's Rules of Procedure and the provisions of the Rules of the House of Representatives applicable to the rights of witnesses.

(m) Witnesses may be accompanied by their own counsel for the purpose of advising them concerning their constitutional rights. The Chairman may punish breaches of order and decorum, and of professional responsibility on the part of counsel, by censure and exclusion from the hearings; and the Committee may cite the offender to the House of Representatives for contempt.

(n) Each witness subpoenaed to provide testimony or other evidence shall be provided the same per diem rate as established, authorized, and regulated by the Committee on House Administration for Members, officers and employees of the House, and as the Chairman considers appropriate, actual expenses of travel to or from the place of examination. No compensation shall be authorized for attorney's fees or for a witness' lost earnings. Such per diem may not be paid if a witness had been summoned at the place of examination.

(o) With the approval of the Committee, a witness, upon request, may be provided with a transcript of his or her deposition or other testimony taken in executive session, or, with the approval of the Chairman and Ranking Minority Member, may be permitted to examine such transcript in the office of the Committee. Any such request shall be in writing and shall include a statement that the witness, and counsel, agree to maintain the confidentiality of all executive session proceedings covered by such transcript.

RULE 27. FRIVOLOUS FILINGS

If a complaint or information offered as a complaint is deemed frivolous by an affirmative vote of a majority of the members of the Committee, the Committee may take such action as it, by an affirmative vote of its members, deems appropriate in the circumstances.

RULE 28. REFERRALS TO FEDERAL OR STATE AUTHORITIES

Referrals made under clause 3(a)(3) of Rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives may be made by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the members of the Committee.

BUTLER BULLDOGS ADVANCE TO SWEET SIXTEEN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentle-

woman from Indiana (Ms. CARSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. CARSON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana, President Bobby Fong, Coach Todd Lickliter, and the outstanding basketball team, affectionately named the Butler Bulldogs.

The Bulldogs, despite previous rejection from previous participation in the championship games, won last Saturday over Louisville by 79 to 71, to advance to the Sweet 16 of the NCAA Men's Basketball Championship.

Coach Todd Lickliter, son of a coach, led the Bulldogs to an outstanding season record of 27 to 5 overall. As winners of the Horizon League's regular season crown, Coach Lickliter and his team earned an at-large bid to the NCAA tournament.

I commend the Bulldog players whose outstanding teamwork has led them to the Sweet 16: Brandon Miller, Joel Cornette, Duane Lightfoot, Darnell Archey, Mike Monserez, Avery Sheets, Lewis Curry, Bruce Horan, Ben Grunst, Jeff James, Mike Moore, Andy Grunst, Nick Gardner, Rob Walls and Ryan Reynolds.

The Bulldogs face Oklahoma, No. 1 seed of the East, in the NCAA East Regional semifinals this Friday in Albany, New York.

Not only do I want to commend Butler University for their athletic achievements, but I also want to make note of their high academic standards by acknowledging them as having the highest graduation rate, 86 percent, of all schools remaining in the tournament.

It has been an exceptional season for the Bulldogs who have defied all odds and truly excelled as a team. I applaud the Bulldogs' excellent performance and sportsmanship and wish them good luck in this Friday's game.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BLACKBURN). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SMITH of Michigan addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO of Oregon addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

MISTREATMENT OF OUR NATION'S VETERANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. WATERS. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the subject of this special order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

Ms. WATERS. Madam Speaker, I am joined here on the floor of the House of Representatives by my colleagues to simply bring to the attention of the President of the United States and to our Republican colleagues the mistakes they are making in the way they are mistreating our Nation's veterans in the 2004 budget that passed our House in the wee hours of the morning last Friday.

The irony of the President of the United States leading the deep and harmful cuts in this budget while we are in the middle of a war in the Persian Gulf, with our brave men and women in harm's way, is more than any American can understand. The veterans of this country are honored in ceremonies on Veterans Day and Memorial Day and at conventions, dinners, receptions and on and on and on, but when it comes to putting our money where our mouths are, increasingly we are abandoning our veterans and not taking care of their needs, as we promise them when we recruit them and when we benefit from their services.

God willing, these young men and women fighting in Iraq will some day be veterans. They are going to have medical needs, housing needs; and we will need to pay for special programs and services to attend to the problems that they will have created by their service to this country. How then can we in good conscience turn our backs on these young men and women by cutting their budgets? We should be happy to provide services for our veterans.

The President of the United States will probably try and tell the American public that we really cannot afford to take care of our veterans, but how can the President explain to our veterans why he insisted on a \$1.3 trillion tax cut in 2001 and has come back to Congress with a demand for \$675 billion in new tax cuts, tax cuts that benefit the wealthiest people in our society?

Madam Speaker, it does not take a Harvard scholar to know we cannot keep cutting and cutting and cutting our income and pay for our basic services and have money for a rainy day. This President is simply mismanaging this country. We are now in deficit. The economy is failing. Our President and the members of his party have failed to come up with a stimulus package, and we have placed our Social Security system in jeopardy. Education is underfunded, and millions of Americans have no health care. But one of the most unconscionable consequences of the Republican budget is the deep and devastating cuts to our veterans.

Let me just give my colleagues an example of how devastating it is. The Republican budget cuts \$25 billion from veterans programs at a time when the Department of Veterans Affairs is already severely underfunded. The 2004 House budget has reduced funding for veterans health care by \$844 million below the President's inadequate recommendation for next year.

Over 10 years these programs will be cut by \$9.7 billion. The House budget cuts \$463 million from benefit programs such as disability compensation, pension, vocational rehabilitation, education and survivors benefits this year.

Over the next 10 years, these programs will be cut by \$15 billion. These cuts will likely result in the loss of 9,000 VA physicians and 19,000 nurses. It could also result in the loss of 5,000 nursing home beds for veterans.

Madam Speaker, I am so proud this evening to be a Democrat because my party developed our own budget, and we tried to convince our Republican colleagues not to make the deep cuts that they are making. The Democratic budget took a much more responsible approach to our Nation's heroes.

Unlike the Republican budget, the Democratic budget does not include any cuts to veterans benefits over the next 10 years. In fact, it provides much-needed increases. It provides for more health care than the President's budget and the House Republican budget in each of the next 10 years.

The Democratic plan provides \$216 million next year for veterans health programs, including medical research and construction. It increases funding for these programs by \$2 billion over the next 10 years, and it fully funds compensation for service-connected disabilities, burial benefits, means-tested pensions for permanently disabled low-income veterans, Montgomery GI Bill education benefits, rehabilitation benefits and housing loan programs.

In conclusion, the Democratic budget is an important and responsible budget that truly respects the sacrifices our veterans have made for our country.

This evening I call on the President and my Republican colleagues to stop the empty rhetoric and support our veterans before we finally resolve the differences in the budget and come up with a budget that is going to be signed by the President of the United States. I hope we can reverse the harm that is being done in this Republican budget.

Mr. EDWARDS. Madam Speaker, will the gentlewoman yield?

Ms. WATERS. I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. EDWARDS. Madam Speaker, I first want to thank the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) for giving us the opportunity tonight to speak out on behalf of America's veterans, and I can say to my colleagues firsthand that this is not the first time she has spoken out. Because 12 years ago she and I were both new members of the Committee on Veterans Affairs,

and our veterans service organizations quickly learned that no one would speak out more loudly and more eloquently or more firmly in behalf of our Nation's veterans.

Madam Speaker, I am privileged to represent the only two division Army installation in the United States, Fort Hood, Texas. Even as we speak tonight in the comfort of this congressional hall, thousands of soldiers from my district are being deployed to the Iraqi theater and within days could be fighting on behalf of our country.

□ 1945

Those of us here rise tonight to speak on behalf of those soldiers, our future veterans. There is one fundamental point that I would like to emphasize in my remarks, and that is that the true test of Congress' commitment to veterans is not what we say; it is what we do. Now, I would say it is fair that some people in this country believe that Republicans are veterans' best friends, but we should look at the facts. The fact is that not many Americans saw what happened at 3 a.m. on the House floor last Friday morning, but this is the fact. On that morning 214 House Republicans voted to cut veterans benefits by \$28 billion, to cut veterans benefits by \$28 billion. Then 5 minutes later, they voted for a resolution saying we support our troops in Iraq.

Madam Speaker, I find that hypocrisy to be outrageous. Last Friday morning, 214 House Republicans voted to cut veterans benefits, including benefits for war-wounded combat veterans, cut their benefits and their pensions and compensation checks; and 5 minutes later they voted for a resolution with no force of funds behind it saying we support our troops.

Madam Speaker, today's troops in Iraq are tomorrow's veterans. So when Members voted last Friday to cut \$28 billion out of veterans programs, they are basically voting to cut the veterans benefits of those fighting and putting their lives on the line for us right now. That is outrageous.

Do not just take my word for it. Let us see what a distinguished American, Edward Heath, Sr., the National Commander of Disabled American Veterans, had to say about the Republican budget resolution. In a letter that he sent 9 days ago to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HASTERT), this is what Commander Heath said: "Has Congress no shame? Is there no honor left in the hallowed halls of our government? Did you choose to dishonor the sacrifices of our Nation's heroes and rob our programs, health care and disability compensation to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy?"

Well said, Commander Heath.

Now, Madam Speaker, I think it is important to point out that if our country was at a time of war and we were asking all Americans to tighten their belts and sacrifice, I would imagine the first group at the front of the

line to say we will play our part would be American veterans; but not one dollar in the Republican budget resolution was allocated for the Iraqi war, so these cuts were not necessitated to pay for war, they were necessitated to pay for a \$374 dividend tax cut that will go to the wealthiest Americans who are sitting safely in their homes and offices as American soldiers from my district at Fort Hood will be fighting in Iraq. Outrageous.

A dividend tax cut, a dividend tax cut paid for by reduced benefits and health care for our soldiers in Iraq today, and today's and tomorrow's veterans. I find that to be a bad idea at any time, cutting benefits to pay for tax cuts that benefit primarily the wealthiest Americans; but to do so within 24 or 36 hours of the beginning of our war against Iraq I find to be insulting. No wonder the National Commander of the Disabled American Veterans asked the question: Is there no honor left in the hallowed halls of our government?

As the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) pointed out, it was good to know and I am proud as a Democrat to say that almost all House Republicans voted for these cuts, I am proud that all but one House Democrat voted against that resolution with veterans cuts. There were a handful of Republicans who went to the Republican House leadership and said these veterans cuts really are not fair, especially at time of war. I think America's veterans would be interested to hear what the response was from the House Republican leadership when, for example, our colleague, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH), went to them and said we should not be cutting veterans benefits, it is a horrible idea.

Did the House leadership commend the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) for standing up for veterans, the chairman of the Committee on Veterans Affairs? Did they salute him, honor him? I am afraid not, sadly not. Today's Roll Call newspaper on Capitol Hill has a headline stating: "Smith Spars With Leaders, Veterans Chairman Upsets Fellow Republicans on Funding Issues."

Madam Speaker, let me read some of this: "After months of railing against his own leadership, House Veterans Affairs Chairman Chris Smith has earned public rebukes from the Chamber's top Republicans and private warnings that he needs to do a better job toeing the GOP line."

So not only did they not commend him for fighting on behalf of veterans, they threatened him. They said he is guilty of not toeing the GOP line. I am glad to be another colleague of the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) not toeing the GOP line. Perhaps later on they found some way in their hearts to commend him for fighting for veterans.

They said: "Smith has pushed hard for more funding for veterans this year. In the process, he has criticized both

the House Republican budget resolution and the White House spending proposals. Earlier this month, Smith's complaints about veterans funding at a Republican conference meeting so angered Speaker Dennis Hastert that he rose to deliver the New Jersey lawmaker a highly unusual tongue lashing. 'Hastert got up and just shut him down,' said a Republican source that witnessed the exchange. 'It was off the charts. I've never seen anything like it. It was scathing.'

Madam Speaker, a scathing attack from the House Republican leadership on a Republican House Member for the crime of standing up and saying we should not be cutting veterans benefits by \$28 billion in time of war.

I think the veterans of America are smart enough to know the difference between those who speak out on behalf of veterans on patriotic occasions like Memorial Day and Veterans Day, and then vote for a resolution at 3 a.m. on Friday morning saying we support our troops, and 5 minutes later that very morning would vote to cut veterans benefits by \$28 billion. Who do they think they are fooling?

Madam Speaker, they are not fooling the veterans who put on our Nation's uniform, fought for our country, many have died for our country, and those who have survived understand the sacrifices that our country has asked them to make.

This article gets better, Madam Speaker. It goes on and says that the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) does not understand what being a team player is about: "As one Republican staffer put it, 'The leadership wants SMITH to remember that a chairmanship is a privilege, not a right.'"

Let me rephrase that. The American people need to understand that the leadership of this House and top staffers for them have threatened, in effect, the Committee on Veterans Affairs chairmanship by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) for having said that he thought it was a bad idea to cut veterans benefits by \$28 billion. Just as DAV National Commander Heath was outraged and insulted by the cuts for veterans, I think America's veterans are going to be even more outraged at the added insult to injury that the House leadership not only wanted the cuts, they rebuked and even now in effect have threatened the chairmanship of a Member of the House who said that was wrong.

We will be judged when it comes to supporting our veterans not by our words, but by our deeds. That is the way it should be. I hope America's veterans will look at the facts and the present Republican leadership and its effort to undermine important commitments for health care and benefits to America's men and women who have served our Nation.

Ms. WATERS. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman, and I yield to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND).

Mr. STRICKLAND. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) for her care and concern for veterans.

As I rise tonight, I am thinking of two people, one a veteran and one I hope who will soon be a veteran. One of the people I am thinking about is my oldest brother, Charles, who is 79 years old, currently in the hospital with a broken hip. He served our country during World War II. The other individual I am thinking about tonight is a younger person, 20-year-old Matthew Dingus. Matthew is my nephew's son. We do not know where he is, but we know he is in Kuwait; and tonight our thoughts and prayers are with Matthew as he joins other young Americans in carrying out the orders of his Commander in Chief.

I speak tonight not only for veterans, but for all those who are active duty servicemen and women because they hopefully soon will be veterans. It is shocking to me that this Republican administration, that this President who has made the decision to send our young men and women into battle would at the same time preside over a budget that is so harmful to America's veterans. Some of these facts are so shocking as to almost be unbelievable.

Mr. Speaker, if there are those watching who think that I and my colleagues are exaggerating tonight, I encourage them to seek out the facts because what this administration is doing to veterans is shameful. I will just mention a few things.

About a year and a half ago when most veterans went to a VA Hospital to get a prescription medication, they were charged a \$2 copay per prescription, and I was outraged when the Department of Veterans Affairs decided to increase that copayment from \$2 to \$7 a prescription, and I introduced legislation to roll back that copayment increase because many veterans get 10 or more prescriptions a month, and they get a 3-month supply at a time, and veterans on fixed incomes cannot afford this additional financial burden.

But what did the President ask for in his most recent veterans budget? He asked that that copayment be increased from \$7 to \$15 a prescription. Think about that. An additional burden of that magnitude on our veterans, I just simply find it outrageous. How, at a time when we are literally giving tax breaks to the richest people in this country, can we justify increasing the copayment for prescription drugs for our veterans, a copayment that has already been increased from \$2 to \$7, and now the President wants that copayment increased from \$7 to \$15 a prescription? That is outrageous. But the outrage does not stop there.

The President in his budget has asked for a \$250 annual enrollment fee be imposed upon veterans for enrollment in the VA health care system. So we increase the cost of their prescription drugs, and then we impose a \$250 annual enrollment fee.

Then we create a special priority group of veterans. We call it priority group 8, and these are veterans who have served our country with honor; and we are saying to these priority group veterans, some of whom make no more than \$28,000 a year, you are a high-income veteran. And because they are high-income veterans, they will no longer be allowed to enroll in the VA health care system.

□ 2000

I think the American people should know that those of us who serve in this Chamber, the President, his Cabinet, all the Members of the Senate, the Supreme Court and those of us in the House of Representatives make about \$150,000 a year. Yet we have the gall to imply that if you make \$24,000 or \$25,000 a year, you are a high-income veteran and so you should no longer be allowed to enroll in the VA health care system. It is outrageous. It is almost unbelievable when we really look at what they are trying to do to our veterans.

It gets worse. About a year ago, the VA decided to impose a gag order on their health care providers. Think of this. All of the health care providers around the country were told, too many veterans are coming in for services and we do not have enough money to provide those services. I guess it is because we want to use our resources to give tax breaks to wealthy people. And so a memo was put out mandating a change in policy. Health care providers were told, you can no longer market our services. You can no longer participate in community health fairs. You can no longer make public service announcements. You can no longer send out newsletters encouraging veterans to take advantage of the services they are entitled to receive under the law.

Think of that. It is what I call the VA's if-you-don't-ask-we-won't-tell policy. If you do not ask as a veteran what services you are entitled to receive under the law, services that the Congress has decided that you should receive, if you do not ask, the VA system is not going to make an effort to tell you what services you are legally entitled to receive.

Reference has been made here to the VA budget. It is true that the VA budget passed out of this House is a shameful document. No wonder they decided to do it at 3 o'clock in the morning last Friday morning when most of America was asleep. We passed two bills during those late-night hours. One bill was to provide a resolution in support of our troops, the men and women currently fighting for us in Afghanistan and in Iraq and in other parts of this world. Within 5 or 10 minutes of casting that vote, we cast another vote to pass the Republican budget resolution. That Republican budget resolution cuts funding for veterans' benefits and health care by over \$28 billion. Think of that. With one hand we salute our troops and

we pass a resolution thanking them for their service, and with the other hand we take our voting cards and we vote for a budget that cuts \$28 billion out of veterans health care and veterans benefits.

I want to say something that I believe deep in my heart. The best way to honor the troops who are fighting for us now is to keep our promises to the troops who have fought for us in the past. When we honor our veterans, we honor our current young men and women who are fighting for us. The American people need to know what is going on. What we are doing in this Chamber is cutting health care benefits for veterans and other benefits for veterans so that we can have the money and so that we can give it to the richest people in this country in the form of tax cuts.

That is shameful. The American people need to know it; and the veterans of this country need to rise up, draw a line in the sand and say, no more. We paid the price, we have given the service, we have risked our lives, and in some cases we have given our body parts for the defense of this Nation.

This President and this Congress have a responsibility to keep their promises to the veterans.

I want to thank the gentlewoman from California for having this Special Order and for giving us an opportunity to speak out. I want to thank her for her commitment to America's veterans.

Ms. WATERS. Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. I thank the gentlewoman for yielding, and I thank her for holding this Special Order.

First of all, we need to put these cuts in perspective and with the budget to see how we got to where we are. This is a chart, not spin, not adjectives, a chart of the budget deficit which you notice goes deep under the Reagan and Bush administrations, 8 years of digging out in the Clinton administration up to a surplus and right back down into a deep deficit. This is not a war budget way down here, because this was passed without the war budget money in it. The war budget will take you off the chart. This is where we are.

What is the plan? You notice we started with a little surplus in 2001, and we spent all the Medicare surplus; in 2002, all the Medicare, Social Security and then some for as far as you can see. We had no growth, unemployment is up, the stock market is down. And what is the consequence of running up all that debt? Right now, a family of four, divide the country into the interest on the national debt, \$4,500 for a family of four paying on the national debt. If we had not messed up the budget, we would have paid off the whole national debt and have zero debt tax. But by 2008 it will be \$6,400; and by 2013 it will be \$7,500 for a family of four because we have run up so much debt.

Because we have so much debt, we have had to cut the budget. We have

had to cut agriculture. We have had to cut education, energy and commerce; and we have had to cut veterans benefits, disability compensation, pensions, GI bill, housing subsidies, health care. This is wrong. We are cutting these because we have run up the debt because of the tax cuts.

Our veterans deserve better. We should improve the budget before final passage and restore the cuts in those veterans programs. We should honor the sacrifices our troops are making today by restoring the cuts in veterans programs. Today's troops are tomorrow's veterans.

Ms. WATERS. Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN).

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I would like to thank the gentlewoman, also, for holding this Special Order tonight.

I would also like to thank the gentleman from Ohio whom I share Mahoning County with in northeast Ohio. He has done a fine job and been quite a leader on veterans issues.

Madam Speaker, is it no wonder that people do not vote? Is it no wonder that people are disconnected from their government when they see the duplicity that we have seen in the last week or so in this Chamber? It has been stated many times tonight and I hope it will continue to be stated, where on one hand we are falling all over each other to say we are supporting our troops in Iraq and at the same time in the wee hours of the morning we are cutting veterans benefits, \$15 billion in benefits, \$9.7 billion in health care.

All of a sudden, we say that we can afford a tax cut that is primarily going to the top 1 and 2 percent in this country, which is going to lead to more debt. At the same time, we have more seniors, we have more veterans, we have more challenges and need more aid to spread democracy around the world. We need more aid to heal and mend the international relationships that we have ruined over the past few months. We have more of a demand for education in this country.

Madam Speaker, let me make some recommendations. We need to index the GI bill for inflation so that our veterans can afford to be educated. We need to increase the service-connected compensation and death benefits.

One thing that I constantly hear back in my district is the concurrent receipt, where someone who has been issued disability benefits, veterans disability, they leave their limbs on the battlefield all around the world, they come home, and they do not just take the benefits, they go out and they work and they get a Federal job and earn a Federal military retirement. And then we have the audacity to say you are not allowed to get both. You can leave your limb in Europe, but you are not allowed to get any benefit from it.

If we say we support our troops now, then we can only really mean it if we support our troops from wars gone by. And so I urge this Congress to reevalu-

ate the decisions we made in the wee hours of the morning last week. Let us not be duplicitous, let us not contradict ourselves by saying one thing and doing something completely different and, more importantly, let us respect the sacrifices that have put us all in this Chamber, the respect for freedom and the dignity and what this country really stands for. Let us honor our veterans.

Ms. WATERS. Madam Speaker, I am so proud of Democrats this evening. They have taken this evening to come to the floor to speak up for this Nation's veterans.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS).

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today to ask this Congress to seriously consider the harmful impact the budget resolution could have on veterans health care and other VA services. Already, thousands of veterans face waiting lists 6 months or longer to see a physician in a VA medical facility. All too often, veterans must seek treatment elsewhere simply because the VA does not have the resources to meet the need.

With so many veterans living in San Diego, I see firsthand the difficulties they encounter. Just today, Petty Officer Al Kovach, a paralyzed veteran from Coronado, called my office to share his story. He was bedridden for more than a year due to a service-related injury. Once doctors realized he required surgery, it took 6 months for an operating room to become available. I have heard from hundreds of others who have experienced similar delays in the VA health care system.

I do not see how, after the great sacrifices they have made, we can support a budget that cuts more than \$25 billion in VA funding over the next several years. This astonishing amount will greatly reduce services and undoubtedly cause these waiting lists for health care to become even longer.

Madam Speaker, we are in a time of war. Last week we stood before the Nation and passed a resolution in support of our military personnel fighting in Iraq. On the same day, this body approved a budget outline that communicated a very different message to the men and women in the battlefield, that when the fighting is done and you return home, do not expect us to care for your needs.

I call on my colleagues to correct this contradiction, to prove that we support the men and women in harm's way and to prove to our veterans that we appreciate their sacrifices. We must restore appropriate levels of funding to the health care system and other VA services. Like the young men and women fighting today in Iraq, our veterans were there when we called upon them. Now we must be there when they call upon us.

Ms. WATERS. Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Indiana (Ms. CARSON).

Ms. CARSON of Indiana. Madam Speaker, I extend certainly my heartfelt appreciation to the honorable gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) for bringing this very crucial situation to the ears and eyes of America.

Madam Speaker, we come into this Chamber on a regular basis and we are faced with this wonderful display of the first President of the United States, George Washington. In 1789, General, President George Washington said, "The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional as to how they perceive veterans of earlier wars and how they were treated and appreciated by this country."

How scary to think that that is still true today. It is hard to believe that those words, 200 years ago plus, have so much meaning today. We all know what President Washington was saying. We recognize and acknowledge the service of our veterans if we are to expect our young people to serve and to fight. The government must do its part with their benefits.

□ 2015

All of us as citizens must do our part; and the great corporations of this country need to do their part, too. After all, corporations are the direct beneficiaries of veterans services because, collectively, veterans have preserved the free enterprise system under which corporations operate.

Due to the limitation of time remaining, let me eliminate some of my comments and point up a few facts for edification.

Estimates are that homeless veterans run from 200,000 to 294,000, based on a VA fact sheet and the community homelessness assessment for veterans. Twenty-five percent of homeless persons are veterans. Thirty-three percent of male homeless persons are veterans. Seven hundred and seventy-five Reserve and National Guard personnel working in the VA were called up for active duty in Operation Iraq Freedom. This created a shortage in critical care nurses which may negatively affect veterans' care or add to the preponderance of the problems that veterans already face.

The Department of Defense announced today the identity of an Army soldier unfortunately killed in action March 24 in Iraq. Army Specialist Gregory P. Sanders, 19 years of age, Indianapolis, Indiana, was assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 69th Armor, Fort Stewart, Georgia.

A quote from a female soldier at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, who was waiting to get shipped out to the Persian Gulf, a future veteran, knows what the cost is and yet is willing to serve: "People are dying over there. Let me go and do my job. I want to help my comrades."

Ladies and gentlemen of America, there are some of us who came under

fierce criticism for not supporting the resolution that passed last week because in part it commended the war in which America is now engaged; and, yes, indeed it did provide our support and our prayers to those noble women and men who are serving in Iraq for the safety of our country, but let me say very sincerely there is not a Member in the House of Representatives that does not support all of those women and men who serve in harm's way 24 and 7. We love you, we uphold you, we respect you, and we appreciate you for stepping out in that situation that most Members of Congress who are here today would not dare do.

But I am pained to know that, even in our prison system, those who are incarcerated today constitute a large proportion of veterans who were in the Persian Gulf, who were in Vietnam. We just had an execution in my State last week of a Persian Gulf War veteran who was convicted for murdering someone at the military camp. A terrible situation, an abominable situation, but what is America doing for our veterans? We support the troops by resolution, but what do we do in fact in terms of those noble men and women who return to this country?

Again, I thank the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) and the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) so very much because I know they, too, love and admire the troops that are serving so fearlessly for the United States of America; and I am so grateful that they have called this very urgent and critical matter to the attention of all of the people in this country who love the troops but who need to recognize what happens to the troops when they return back to American soil and thus become veterans of America. I thank them so very much.

Ms. WATERS. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Indiana (Ms. CARSON).

I call on the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER).

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding, and I thank them all for being here tonight to stand up for our Nation's veterans.

Our troops in Iraq are being funded at the rate of about \$1 billion every 2½ or 3 days, \$1 billion every 2½ or 3 days. We want our troops to have the best. We want our troops to have everything they need for success in Iraq. But if we have the money to send our troops to war, we must have the money for them when they come back from war, and that is all we are saying here tonight.

What we are saying is for 2½ or 3 days of that war in Iraq, we can fund everything that our veterans need this coming year. That is the amount of money that has been subtracted by the Republicans in their budget, \$25 billion over the next decade.

We have the money. It is a question of the will. We have the resources. It is a question of our priorities. And, ladies and gentlemen, it is time to call the

names and take the prisoners of those who are hurting our veterans.

You hear on Memorial Day and on Veterans Day the words of support, but watch what they do when they come and vote. Watch what they do when they vote on the budget. Watch what they do when they vote on the appropriations. Watch what they do when they take your future away from you. Watch the procedural votes. Watch us, ladies and gentlemen. Because if you just take the words, everybody here supports you, but the money ain't there to make it happen.

Let me say a couple of things that the Republican budget takes away if it goes through. As we heard earlier, a co-payment for a month's worth of prescription drugs, the drugs that you need to survive, is going to double, more than double, from \$7 to \$15. We are going to charge enrollment fees to veterans who are in "a higher priority" but who are veterans and who deserve the treatment, and we can give it to them. We are going to cut 5,000 nursing home beds so only those veterans with the worst kind of disability will be able to be cared for.

We will abandon our goal of eliminating homelessness amongst our veterans. Every evening, Madam Speaker, 250,000 of our Nation's veterans are on the streets. Can the Members imagine that as a way to pay back what they have given to our country? They are homeless, and we do not seem to have the resources to change it. We give the program \$20 million a year, \$20 million a year. That is nothing in the context of our budget.

Disabled veterans, disabled veterans will be cut from care if this budget goes through. The Montgomery GI bill, which helps our education of our veterans, will not be funded. VA home loans will not be funded. Markers and flags for deceased veterans will not be funded.

This is hypocrisy, ladies and gentlemen, hypocrisy that comes from saying we are for the veterans and not providing the money.

Madam Speaker and the gentlewoman from California, right now there are 200,000 veterans who have waited more than 6 months for their first appointment. Veterans will die while they are waiting for that first appointment, and yet we say we cannot do anything. Let us resolve to change this.

I ask all the veterans, when we consider the appropriations, come to Washington, surround the Capitol, camp out, bivouac, and do not leave this place until we pass a budget that is worthy of you.

Ms. WATERS. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER), and I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. HONDA).

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BLACKBURN). The Chair will remind all Members to direct their remarks to the Chair and not to the viewing veterans.

Mr. HONDA. Madam Speaker, to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS), I really appreciate this opportunity for us to be able to speak to the members of our country and to share the information that somehow and sometimes never get to their years.

Madam Speaker, I rise this evening to talk about what it really means to support our troops and our Nation's veterans.

Madam Speaker, I believe it is easy for any Member of Congress to stand here in the well on the floor and say they support veterans and support our troops in Iraq. It is always easy to talk the talk, but the real question we should be asking is, will they walk the walk?

Just last week, the Senate passed a unanimous resolution in support of our troops. The following day, the House Republican leadership had the same opportunity to send an equally powerful message to our troops by introducing a clean resolution similar to the Senate version. But, instead, the House Republicans denied the troops this message of unity and decided to politicize the issue by drafting House Concurrent Resolution 104, a resolution that included language in support of President Bush's misguided Iraq policy.

By drafting a resolution that mixes support for our troops and support for President Bush's policies, Republicans sought to coerce Members opposed to the war into voting for the resolution. While I fully support our troops, I vehemently disagree with the President's decision to abandon a diplomatic solution to disarming Saddam Hussein and could not support a resolution that endorses that decision.

However disturbed I was about the politicization of support for our troops, it does not even come close to the feelings of outrage I have over the passage of the House Republican budget resolution. Just 10 minutes before the passage of House Concurrent Resolution 104, the House Republicans pushed through their budget resolution. I can think of no better way of describing the Republican budget resolution than by using a quote by the Disabled American Veterans. The quote is: "Has Congress no shame? Is there no honor left in the hallowed halls of our Government that you choose to dishonor the sacrifices of our Nation's heroes and rob our programs, health care and disability compensation, to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy?"

The Republican budget resolution makes room, makes room, for the President's \$1.6 trillion tax cut, while cutting discretionary health care spending for veterans below the level needed to maintain purchasing power at the 2003 level.

The Republican budget also directs the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs to cut \$14.6 billion from mandatory benefit payments to veterans, including compensation for service-connected disabilities, burial benefits, and veterans' education benefits.

This is why the Disabled American Veterans, the Paralyzed Veterans of America, and the American Legion all issued statements opposing the Republican budget.

The Democrats, in contrast, eliminated the \$14.6 billion Republican cut to mandatory veterans' benefits program, including compensation for service-connected disabilities, burial benefits, Montgomery GI education benefits, and housing loan programs. Our budget also protected the veterans' health benefits from the Republican cuts, providing \$16.2 billion more than the House Republican budget.

I voted for the Democratic budget. I am proud to support our troops. I am proud to support and reflect our budget and our values.

Madam Speaker, this pattern of patriotic posturing must end. Congress needs to start showing real support for our troops by taking care of our Nation's veterans. During this time of war, we must do no less.

Republican leaders can sure talk the talk, but can they walk the walk?

Ms. WATERS. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER). I call on the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY).

Mr. POMEROY. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding, and I especially thank her for organizing this important hour to discuss the deeply troubling cuts in the funding of veterans' services in this country.

This is a serious night. We are at war. We have young men and women of our country with their lives on the line in Iraq, fighting for all of us, and yet here in the Congress, while we honor their service and to a man and woman serving in this Chamber, I believe we honor their service, we are fighting this partisan fight on whether or not we ought to fully fund the veterans' services.

I find it nothing less than stunning that our Republican friends would bring a budget that takes \$28 billion out of the funding of veterans' services over the next 10 years, \$14 billion from that portion of veterans' funding that goes to the health benefits for veterans, and \$14 billion from that portion of the budget that funds the disability benefits for those who have laid their lives on the line and wear the scars of battle the rest of their lives.

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It is unbelievable that this, at all times, would be the time that we would see a budget cutting veterans services to fund those tax cuts, tax cuts that flow so disproportionately to the wealthiest few in this country, contained in the Republican budget. It is wrong.

You do not have to take our word for it, because the veterans of this country have spoken on this matter, and spoken with one voice and great clarity.

The Paralyzed Veterans of America: "We do not consider payments to war-

disabled veterans, pensions for the poorest disabled veterans and GI Bill benefits for soldiers returning from Afghanistan to be waste, fraud and abuse" worthy of the kind of cuts in the majority budget.

The Disabled Veterans of America state: "Has Congress no shame? Is there no honor left in the hallowed halls of our government that you choose to dishonor the sacrifices of our Nation's heroes and rob our programs to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy?"

The American Legion writes: "This budget defies common sense. There must be a better way to provide tax relief to the American people than to balance the budget on the backs of disabled veterans."

Mr. Speaker, there are other colleagues here also eager to speak, so I will cut my remarks short, other than to say in my entire time in Congress, I have never seen a worse policy judgment than to cut the funding of veterans services while our Nation is at war and the lives of young men and women are literally laid on the line in battle for our country tonight. We have got to overturn the Republican budget.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from North Dakota.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ).

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. I want to take this opportunity to thank the gentlewoman for taking this time. I have the pleasure of sitting on the Committee on Veterans Affairs, and let me just indicate that we really must honor our veterans' service. We honor them by ensuring that we honor the promise that we make to them to provide them with the access to quality benefits and services once they come home.

Let me also add at this point in time, our veterans are reaching that point in time where they need our help. They are reaching the age where they need this assistance. They were there for us; we need to be there for them now. With our troops in the field and, sadly, with many Americans already experiencing war's devastating effects, it is shameful that the House would pass a budget resolution on the same day that our soldiers began Operation Iraqi Freedom cutting \$15 billion, yes, cutting \$15 billion, from the veterans disability compensation programs and \$9.7 billion from veterans health care.

The budget resolution also, as it calls for that cut, indicates that it is under the disguise of trying to do away with "fraud, waste and abuse." Let me tell you that 90 percent of the budget on spending for the VA entitlement is paid out in monthly payments to disabled veterans and their survivors. I do not consider payments to our war-disabled veterans pensions, pensions for the poorest disabled veterans and the GI benefits for soldiers returning from Afghanistan to be fraud, waste and abuse.

I recently joined, and I want to thank my colleague on the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, the gentleman from New Jersey (Chairman

SMITH), in a very bipartisan recommendation to the Committee on the Budget, which would have added \$3 billion next year alone for veterans discretionary programs, including medical care and research, construction and programs that fund the administration costs of other important benefits such as compensation, pension and education programs. I want to thank the gentleman for the efforts he has made in working with us in that area.

But I urge all my colleagues to do the right thing and to honor our commitment to our veterans. These cuts are irresponsible; they are shameful and unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity once again to thank the gentlewoman for taking this time tonight. It is important that we continue to talk about this issue. We cannot allow this issue to go away, because, as we stand here tonight and as we go back and talk to our veterans, I never hear one Member talk and say they are not going to be responsive. Yet Members say it is important what we do, not necessarily what we say, because what we do, and the budget says it all, that is going to be very important.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for allowing me to be here tonight with her.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT).

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding. I want to congratulate her for presenting to the American people the truth.

I was so impressed as I heard my colleagues come to the floor and describe the realities of what is occurring. The gentleman from Texas just alluded to the chairman of the Committee on Veterans Affairs and praised him for his efforts. It is fascinating to read in today's Roll Call that he was castigated and admonished by the House Republican leadership for his efforts in this regard. That, I suggest, says something loud and clear to the American people.

We know what is happening. The veterans know what is happening. But it is time for the American people to be informed, and I congratulate the gentlewoman for her efforts.

What I find particularly fascinating is sometime supposedly next week we will be considering a supplemental budget in the amount of \$75 billion, some \$63 billion of which I think we all support. It is for our troops and for the men and women that find themselves in harm's way. The rest of the money, much of it, is allocated to other nations: \$1 billion for Turkey, monies for Egypt, for Jordan. And for what reason I cannot understand. But if we can afford to take care of the rest of the world, we should be able to take care of the men and women that served us, not just in this war, not just in the Vietnam conflict, not just in Korea and World War II, but all of our veterans.

It is absolutely unconscionable. It is un-American. Those men and women

that will be coming home from the Middle East and leave the military, many of them will assume the title "veteran." While we honor them while they are there, we are disrespectful to them when they come home, and that has to stop.

We, and I know the gentlewoman has been a leader in this regard, have to design a strategy when it comes to that supplemental budget to take care of those men and women and not to continue the disrespect that has been shown to them.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I tonight rise in ardent support of our troops fighting in Iraq. As a veteran of the Korean War, I fully understand the sober task which our soldiers have undertaken. We must remember that these troops are on the front line doing their duty, saluting and following orders. They are great Americans. I want them to know, along with their families, that they have my unwavering support. It is well known that I strongly disagree with the policies that have led us to war in Iraq. It is my opinion on many, many levels that the U.S. should not be at war in Iraq. However, my support of U.S. troops is resolute.

I think it is important that support be more than just lip service. Last week I voted against the Bush Administration's budget which would have drastically reduced veteran's health care and benefit programs. Even though the President is waging this preventive doctrine war, he presented a budget to Congress that would have cut Mandatory Veterans Programs benefits by billions of dollars. Mandatory veteran's programs include disability compensation, pensions, vocational rehabilitation, and survivors' benefits. The Bush administration's budget slashes compensation for service connected disabilities and education benefits by \$15 billion and cuts veteran's health care funding by another \$15 billion over the next ten years. The Disabled American Veterans, the Paralyzed Veterans and the American Legion have all issued statements opposing the Bush Administration's budget. In fact, the Michigan Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans wrote to me, stating, "the proposal, if implemented, would have a shocking effect on VA health care services and be an affront to millions of veterans. The proposal, approximately 1.3 billion above the FY 2003 appropriation, would not even cover inflationary impact and anticipated salary increases for VA health care workers." Furthermore, "budget resolutions set spending priorities. We find it hard to fathom that veterans would not be priority to the Budget Committee, or the leadership of the House of Representatives." I submit to you that budget cuts such as these do not bode well for strengthening the solidarity of our troops to our country.

I'd like to close with a quote from George Washington, "The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be justified, shall be directly propositional as to how they perceive the veterans of wars were treated and appreciated by the Nation."

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BRADLEY of New Hampshire). The time of the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) has expired.

SUPPORTING OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. KINGSTON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, before we begin, let me yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT), the distinguished former district attorney from Boston, to finish his statement.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I thank my dear friend for yielding. I thank the gentleman for his spirit of collegiality.

Mr. Speaker, what I wanted to conclude with was this observation, and I direct it to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle: if we are unable to work out in the course of our consideration of the supplemental budget full funding for all veterans services, then it is time for the veterans in this country to take action. Many of us have read in our history books that there was a march on Washington in the early 1930s. It is time for the veterans organizations and for the American people to march again.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, we want to talk a little bit about the situation in Iraq tonight and a number of other subjects.

Mr. Speaker, I am joined by the distinguished gentleman from Colorado (Mr. BEAUPREZ), a businessman and new freshman. The gentleman is on his way to take his daughter to dinner, and, as a father of two daughters, that takes high priority. So let me yield to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. BEAUPREZ).

Mr. BEAUPREZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding. It is a pleasure to be with the gentleman tonight on the floor.

Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight with my colleagues to commend the tremendous progress being made by our troops in Iraq. However, I am disgusted with recent media reports proclaiming setbacks and delays of our troops in battle.

Mr. Speaker, such editorializing of the news represents a severe disconnect with reality. At this very moment we are within minutes of Operation Iraqi Freedom being just 1 week old. One week, Mr. Speaker. In one week, we have flown over 7,000 combat sorties, we have delivered 600 Tomahawk missiles with surgical precision such as never before seen in battle, we have moved numerous ground troops to within 50 miles of Baghdad, and we have killed or captured thousands of Iraqi soldiers. We have adapted, we have overcome, and, Mr. Speaker, we will prevail.

But in the din of news reports and live briefings, the fog of battle for Americans can be information overload. We learn a lot about what is happening today. But for the next couple of minutes, Mr. Speaker, I would like